

Political History Collection
Interview H.0046.01 : Tape 1

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Location of Interview: India
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Language of Interview: Tibetan
Interviewed by: Paljor Tsarong
Name: Baba Aka [Tib. 'ba' pa a dga']
Gender: Male
Age: 75
Date of Birth: 1917

Abstract

Baba Aka [Tib. 'ba' pa a dga'] is a Khamba from a well-off farming family in Targye Gomba in Ganzi. In this interview, he discusses how the Chinese dealt with the people of his village and how anti-Chinese sentiments increased and various resistance movements arose.

Tape 1

Q: When you came from Tibet, what did you do at that time? What happened when you left home?

A: In the beginning, the Chinese treated us very nicely. They duped and lured us and they appointed the high-ranking [Tib. mthon po] people as chiefs/leaders [Tib. dpon po] and left them up there. They also gave money, tea and clothing to the humble poor people saying they will help them. Later, they called the chiefs to a meeting and they hid them in some place for a month so we couldn't see them. They told the other poor people, "In the past, the well-off households had suppressed and exploited you. Now the government will support you so you don't need to be afraid and you have to oppose them." Like this, they held meetings day and night, and at night they also showed movies. In the movies, they showed the landlords and the rich farmers keeping pretty girls and many servants and maidservants to work for them. After that, they brought the landlords to the meeting and made the miser hold struggle sessions against them.

Q: At that time, what were the people thinking in general?

A: At that time, I thought that the Chinese are treating us well and they are paying salaries. I didn't know that they were deceiving us and luring us. Later, they gathered the beggars in a big house and they differentiated the people [into classes]. At that time, I thought that they [Chinese] are bad. In the beginning, they [Chinese] told us to lend them things like cushions and guns and then they told the people that they are not allowed to keep even the knives used for cutting meat and they collected all the weapons. We had to hand over all the things and they took all the chiefs to China. Then they [Chinese] told the remaining people, "You have two paths: a white one and a black one. The white is a long and smooth path and there is grass to eat on the way. If you go on the black path, there is no way to get through and at the end, you will fall into the river. On which of the paths do you want to go?" They held the meeting every day and the soldiers surrounded us holding guns. Like this, they cornered and asked us questions every day.

They [Chinese] separated the farmers from the monasteries saying there wasn't anything for these to be involved with each other and they cornered and asked questions to the farmers. They [Chinese] came to the households and said that [said] you had 2-3 guns and you [really] have 4-5 guns. Then they told the numbers of guns they had and they [the Chinese] robbed all the guns and the ammunition. There were many households who had 15-20 guns and there were also households who had 4-5 guns. At that time, the chiefs had already been taken away. After that, the chiefs came back once and we discussed that the situation is not good and we talked about whether we should stay or leave and it was decided to leave because there was a danger of being killed. At that time, we had 17-18 altogether and there were 3-4-5 chiefs. Some of us had wives and children at home. We talked to each other saying that if we remain inside, one day the Chinese will eliminate us so we won't feel regret even if we would be killed after leaving. We went through Tau [Tib. rta'u] and along the way all the places were filled with the Chinese and there was a Chinese cavalry unit. So there wasn't any way to go because the Chinese had surrounded us. After that, we went to Lhoka.

Q: At that time, who were the leaders?

A: At that time, there were 5 of us. The chiefs [Tib. dpon khag]--Lonyendra [Tib. blo snyan grags] had already returned to Lhasa--The oldest one was Rodung Gyantse [Tib. ?] and there was Dutetshang [Tib. ?] Riga [Tib. rigs dga'], Dakpo Tsewang Trinley [Tib. tshe dbang 'phrin las], and Nyerpatsang Tamdrin Wangdrag [Tib. gnyer pa tshang rta mgrin dbang grags]. We said that we will fight and even if one person is not left [alive], this is decided by karmic law. If we stay like this, we will lose anyway. If we fight, our people would be killed one by one and our people will be finished. If you kill a hundred Chinese, a thousand will come, and if you kill a thousand, ten thousand will come. But anyway we decided to fight with the Chinese.

At that time, we thought that when we got on the mountain, we will have problem with food and beverages. so we took some dzos that the Chinese had given to the people. At that time, we had 14 riders going together. When we got on the mountain, we saw that there were over 100 Chinese trucks and they were charging forward firing machine guns. At that time, we were going after the animals and were waiting on the mountain and were unable to fight with them. Then on the way, we exchanged 4 dzos for better horses because we needed horses.

We stayed for a year in Lhoka. When we were talking about what the Chinese were doing at that time [in Targye Gomba], we heard from some of the nomads that some people had come from India wearing helmets to the Nathula [Tib. sna stod la] Mountain Pass to oppose the Chinese. So we decided to go from that place because we thought if there would be somebody helping us, it would be good to fight the Chinese there [in Tibet] and we went through the northern route and arrived at Lhasa. At that time, we found out that this was just a lie and there weren't any people wearing helmets and we didn't have anything to do. Then we heard that it would be good to go to India for pilgrimage so I went to India.

Q: Do you have anything to tell us about the Targye Gomba [Tib. dar rgyas dgon pa] Monastery?

A: I can tell you what I heard from other people. At that time, among the farmers and the nomads, the people who had made up their minds had already left their homes. After that, the Chinese gave money to the poor people and gave titles to the better off people in the monastery and they made the monastery into two parts like the outer and inner parts. After that, over ten thousands soldiers surrounded the monastery and they also spread soldiers in the area for many days journey and planned to destroy their enemies from wherever they would come.

One night, they [Chinese] sent a lot of trucks and surrounded the Targye Gomba Monastery. When the day broke, they had already taken their places and they were waiting for an ambush. Inside the monastery, they didn't have any plan. Then they [Chinese] built bunkers near the monastery and they shouted, "Are you people in the monastery going to surrender or not? Are you going to hand over your guns or not? If you don't surrender, we will shoot you and fire canons and enter the monastery and completely destroy the monastery."

Then the people in the monastery held a meeting and some people said, "The soldiers have already surrounded the monastery and some people are already arrested. If we still remain like this, the remaining people will be eliminated. So it would be better to surrender." Some people said, "After handing over the guns, let's see what we should try to do." So finally they told the Chinese that we will surrender and they handed over their guns. At that time, the Chinese had already arrested the geshe monks and the senior monk teachers and they had also arrested Zaro Lojin and Ngawang Norbu. They thought that we will not be able to escape from being killed. So they made up their mind and stabbed the Chinese leader and robbed his gun and they rode their horses and got out. At that time, the Chinese had surrounded that place. So they shot machine guns and killed Zaro Lojin right at that place and Ngawang Norbu also was killed later.

At that time, the main monastery handed over the guns and then the Chinese appointed the poor people as leaders [Tib. 'go 'dzin] and the previous monastic people in charges were put down. Then they [Chinese] told the poor monks to complain [about their sufferings] and some of the poor monks said that the monks in charge of the monastery did such and such things to them. One day, the Chinese withdrew most of their troops, but they still surrounded the monastery. After the guns were handed over to the Chinese, about 100 monks ran away from the monastery.

Q: Who was their leader [Tib. 'go byed]?

A: The leader was Pachen Phüntso Wangdrag [Tib. dpa' chen phun tshogs dbang grags], Gelek Wangdrag [Tib. dge legs dbang grags], and Sasung Jiga. They were the leaders. When the 100 monks [who fled] reached a distance of one day's journey, they met the Chinese and they used their swords and charged forward against the Chinese though they didn't have guns. They took some machine guns from the Chinese and many monks were killed and the monks also killed many Chinese with their swords. Then they reached the place called Satsha and they used the guns that they had gotten from the Chinese. They got some machine guns, but they didn't know how to use them. In that place, they fought with the Chinese and they killed a large amount of Chinese but many monks were also killed. They got a lot of Chinese horses and loaded the horses with the ammunition and foodstuffs. The horses were from Xinying. At that time, the monks got very good horses. After that, some of them were killed and some of them got scattered and some of them got wounded and were left behind. At the end, only 30 some monks were left. I heard that after that the Chinese destroyed the monastery completely and didn't even leave a trace of it. They made the place into fields. This is what I remember briefly.

Q: Nowadays, did they newly rebuild the monastery?

A: Yes, I heard that they built a good monastery the same as before. In the past, it was said that there were over 1,900 monks in the monastery, but actually there were over 3,000 monks. There were 15 kinds of groups [Tib. shoga [shog kha]] in the monastery. There were 3 groups in the group called Phari Shoga and there were 4 groups in the Lingtshang [Tib. gling tshang] Shoga. There were 5 groups in the Drewo [Tib. ?] Shoga.

Q: This was the Rupatshang [Tib. ru pa tshang] Shoga, right?

A: Yes, it was the Rupa Shoga.

Q: These all belonged to the monastery, right?

A: Yes.

Q: It has been many years since we lost the place, but you told us very clearly about the events. Thank you.

A: This is what I remembered, but I don't remember clearly.

Q: What village you were from?

A: I am from Getsang Village and my household was called Getsang Nyalo and my name is Baba Aka.